

Proposal for the Steering Committee Five "Big Ideas"

I. Raise Overall Educational Attainment

Background and Statement of Need:

NORED recommends the use of nine comparison states to establish metrics, benchmarks and rankings. Dubbed the Global Challenge States, the group is composed of the top eight states on the New Economy Index (NEI) plus Minnesota (13th) and North Carolina (26th). NEI ranks states on the basis of 21 economic indicators¹ of ability to perform in the new economy. Washington currently ranks 2nd.

When compared to the Global Challenge States (GCS)², Washington ties for next to last place in the percent of ninth graders who finish high school, is last in the percent of ninth graders who enter college and last for those still enrolled their sophomore year. Washington is also last in the percent that graduate from college in 6 years.

When compared to OECD³ nations, the United States (and Washington) do well on one level - relatively high educational attainment among the 25 to 64 year old population. However, when comparing only the cohort of 25 to 34 year olds - slippage in the U.S. is significant. In nearly all of the industrial democracies of the world, populations of working aged adults are rapidly becoming better educated and could soon surpass the United States (and Washington).

One third of the working age population in Washington holds a high school degree or less. One out of four 18 - 24-year olds does not have a high school diploma or a GED.

Washington employers report difficulties in hiring educated workers, often import highly educated employees from other states and nations. This means that Washington citizens are not getting the educational opportunities that would enable their full participation in the knowledge economy.

Description and Possible Strategies:

Maintain Washington's current high ranking in community and technical college participation. Increase baccalaureate and graduate and professional degree

¹ See <http://www.neweconomyindex.org/states/index.html>

² Massachusetts, California, Colorado, Maryland, New Jersey, Connecticut, Virginia, Minnesota and North Carolina

³ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development composed of 30 member countries sharing a commitment to democracy and the market economy.

production to the average of the Global Challenge States. Develop a phased implementation plan, granting priority to high demand fields at both the baccalaureate and sub-baccalaureate levels (the latter including workforce training and apprenticeship programs).

If we had been at the GCS average in 2003, we would have graduated 3900 more bachelor's degree holders (14% increase) and 6600 more graduate and professional degree recipients (64% increase).

Significantly increase participation and completion rates among groups traditionally underserved (first-generation students, low-income students, students of color and those with limited English proficiency). Among the strategies to be considered are:

1. Opportunity Scholarships: provide every high school graduate with "free tuition" for one year of college (at the equivalent CC/TC rate)
2. Opportunity Grants: At least double the Opportunity Grant Pilot Program created by E2SHB 2630.
3. Expanded I-BEST program (adult basic education and workforce training) at the Community and Technical Colleges
4. Washington 21st Century Scholars: provide qualified low-income middle school students a free four-year education at a Washington public institution if they maintain at least a C average in high school and satisfy other eligibility requirements.
5. Allow the State Need Grant for part-time students
6. Provide enriched funding to the institutions for high demand degree programs
7. Utilize independent colleges and universities through an RFP process.
8. Fully utilize branch campuses, university centers and other educational delivery systems.

II. Provide Fair, Sufficient and Stable Funding

Background and Statement of Need:

The cost of providing public higher education is a shared responsibility, with students and their families bearing a portion of the cost through tuition and fees.

Over the past decade, tuition has increased by approximately 80 percent in Washington, while the state's share has declined proportionately. Rather than providing for improved quality, recent tuition increases have constituted a cost-shift from the state taxpayers to the students and their families.

Despite the significant increase in tuition, tuition levels remain moderate when compared to other states. Washington can be characterized as a moderate

tuition/moderate financial aid state, with a four-year institution tuition rate near the national average and need-based financial aid higher than the national average. When compared to the ten Global Challenge States, Washington's research university tuition rate ranks 3rd from the bottom, its comprehensive university rate ranks 4th from the bottom, and the community and technical colleges rests squarely in the middle.

Description and Possible Strategies:

To stabilize tuition and provide reliable funding to improve quality, the state needs a new policy that establishes the top tier of the Global Challenge States as the financial "metric" for support per student and with a mix of state support and tuition move toward that standard over a period time established by the Legislature.

Working collaboratively with the institutions, per-student funding should be developed based upon a simple formula that addresses faculty compensation, faculty-student ratio by level, and the depth of library and instructional support, including technology.

Tuition rates in the four-year sector should be raised to achieve greater parity with counterpart institutions in the Global Challenge States. Tuition rates for the community and technical colleges should not be raised at this time.

Differential pricing rates among institutions should be used as incentives for students to take advantage of available capacity

Institutions that raise tuition more than inflation should commit to holding harmless students below the state median income level by providing institutional aid (in addition to state aid). The state should agree that tuition revenues would not be used to supplant state appropriations.

Performance funding could also be employed as part of an overall funding scheme. Specific objectives and measurable outcomes could be developed and implemented through Performance Agreements between the state and each institution.

The State Need Grant program should be increased to keep pace with tuition and other expenses and made available to part-time students.

III. Improve Articulation and Transitions for Students (more efficient, transparent and seamless).

Background and Statement of Need:

A perennial issue in Washington's higher education system is the difficulty students often experience transitioning from institution to institution, from two-year to four-year institutions, and from high school to college. Although significant improvements have been made through explicit inter-institutional transfer agreements, and curricular efforts like the Math Transitions Project, there remains consistent anecdotal evidence of ongoing issues. A renewed focus on student transitions across and within educational sectors is essential.

In addition, Washington has intransigent student pipeline issues that require dramatic new approaches to tuition and student financial aid policy (see possible strategies above) as well as improved alignment and expectations between K-12 and higher education.

Washington ranks at the bottom of the GCS group in its ability to get students from ninth grade through college. For every 100 ninth graders entering school in Washington, only 16 graduate from college within six years.

Multiple approaches are needed to help students advance within educational sectors and to transition from one sector to the next.

Description and Possible Strategies:

Higher education institutions should share responsibility with K-12 for successful student transitions, using a variety of approaches. Among the strategies that could be considered are:

- Implement a K-12 guidance and advising system that is intensive, student-centered and curricula driven.
- Implement a Post-Secondary guidance and advising system that eases transition within the post-secondary system and to the world of work.
- Develop a one-stop Electronic Advising Platform detailing transfer and degree completion requirements of public institutions
- Expand inter-institutional transfer and articulation agreements
- Support more rigorous minimum admission standards
- Maintain a core course data base related to minimum admission standards
- Create college readiness standards based on competencies

- Emphasize general workplace skills by encouraging participation in pilot projects to credential general workplace skills
- Allow 11th grade students to utilize standardized instruments to test their college readiness
- Maintain a wide variety of dual credit programs
- Expand applied baccalaureate degree opportunities at the community and technical colleges that are articulated with applied associate degrees.
- Support an array of programs that promote successful transitions from work to school

IV. Improve Efficiency, Accountability and Governance

Background and Statement of Need:

Washington has a mixed but essentially decentralized system for funding higher education. There is no explicit statement of public policy that endures across budget cycles. Long-range planning is mandated as a HECB responsibility, and pursued by it and other agencies, SBCTC and WTECB, and the institutions, but at best this is characterized by an absence of system-wide buy-in, often troubled by disagreement and inter-organizational competition.

Similarly, the state's focus on the two-year budget cycle combined with roller coaster economic cycles has made a sustained purpose for higher education investment difficult.

Viewing state funding as an investment, identifying priorities for focusing much of that investment and allowing institutions to manage their affairs while holding them accountable for results should guide new ways of thinking about the state relationship with its higher education institutions. This requires definition, communication, discussion and agreement.

A public higher education agenda is the first missing ingredient if funding policy is to be anything more than simply a matter of spending more money or rearranging allocations. A public agenda would:

- Represent a long-term program, transcending terms of office, political divisions and institutional loyalties
- Contain explicit links with education at all levels
- Recognize the unique needs of each region of the state
- Engage all providers of higher education in the state
- Align all available policy tools - policy leadership, finance, accountability measures and regulation

- Achieve collaboration across sectors, especially at principal transition points
- Use easily understood benchmarks to gauge progress

The second missing ingredient is a new relationship between the state and the colleges and universities, based on a shift to performance- and accountability-based agreements. Through this new vehicle, the state could “purchase” high demand degree production, improved retention and graduation rates, and/or increased participation by traditionally underrepresented student populations. Metrics would be established and progress measured.

At the state level, public higher education governance is decentralized among some 43 boards, 40 of which are institutional governing boards (trustees and regents), one is a system-wide board (community and technical colleges) and two are coordinating boards (higher education and workforce preparation). The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), as constituted in 1985, is assigned significant responsibility. Among its other assignments, is the following mandate:

Coordinate with the governing boards of the two and four-year institutions of higher education, the state board for community and technical colleges, the work force training and education coordinating board, and the superintendent of public instruction to create a seamless system of public education for the citizens of Washington state geared toward student success.

In addition, the HECB is responsible for administering a large number of programs, including all state financial aid programs, the Guaranteed Education Tuition program (GET), the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program (GEAR UP), and the Displaced Homemaker Program.

Description and Possible Strategies:

Improvements to be considered should provide governance and accountability that facilitate performance, seamlessness and efficiency across the P-20 systems.

Among the strategies to be considered are:

- Establish a longitudinal student data system
- Reconstitute the HECB (transfer its administrative functions to another entity and add stakeholders to the membership)
- Develop performance and accountability agreements for measurable objectives
- Improve long term enrollment planning through enrollment conferences
- Establish a P-20 Council

- Require institutional rainy day funds
 - Utilize an Education Budget Overlay
- V. Increase and Sustain research capacity in Washington's higher education system.

Background and Statement of Need:

Despite the large amount of federal grants and contracts at the University of Washington, Washington state's total R & D funds from federal, industrial and institutional sources hovers around the national average. When the subject is the amount of R & D from state and local sources, Washington lags well behind nearly every state in the nation.

Description and Possible Strategies:

Preserve and enhance federally funded research. As appropriate, provide state matching dollars to secure federal grants and contracts and state funding for research focused on the state's unique objectives and needs. Provide greater support for graduate programs and incentives for technology transfer and commercialization of basic and applied research.